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New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . . (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 63 to 79 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Pérez-Otermin (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to offer you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee for the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. We have no doubt that, under your leadership, we will achieve positive and timely results. I pledge my delegation's cooperation to you in all your work. In particular, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his precise analysis of the challenges to and commitments and responsibilities of the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

This year, the international community is under the unshirkable obligation to take concrete steps to ensure that the nuclear non-proliferation regime is respected. That any State should try for any reason to shirk this responsibility would be unacceptable and inexplicable. In the past two years, important progress has been made in the prohibition of nuclear testing and in accessions to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), although some States remain reluctant to accede. Significant progress is also represented by the Ottawa Convention on the total prohibition of anti-personnel mines.

Nevertheless, frustration has mounted in 1998 over the tests that were carried out in the spring in South Asia, marking the expansion of the club of nuclear Powers and ending the restraint which those traditionally non-nuclear States had demonstrated in this respect over the past 50 years. We also regret that no progress has been made in nuclear disarmament and that talks to establish START III are stalemated.

It is clearer today than ever before that the only possible security in the area of weapons of mass destruction rests on the courageous decision purely and simply to eradicate these types of weapons. We cannot continue to live under this threat to every way of life on Earth, which has also been used as a deterrent.

In the light of this scenario, we are proud of the Political Declaration of the Southern Cone Common Market, Bolivia and Chile as a Zone of Peace, signed in Ushuaia, Argentine Republic, on 24 July 1998. This Declaration establishes a support network for non-proliferation activities in all relevant international forums, reaffirms full support for the Treaty of Tlatelolco and declares the Zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

We should also highlight the resolution declaring the nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas, submitted by members of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We hope that it will receive significant support from the majority of States Members of this Organization for the third time.

Within the framework of these efforts, Uruguay supports the entirety of the ministerial declaration entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda", approved on 9 June 1998 by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden.

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In 1997, the Organization of American States adopted the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Illegal Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, which is fundamental to cooperation in this sphere and which could be the basis for debate in a United Nations context. My delegation is convinced that the international community has an important role to play in this area — and that the present situation is favourable to joint action. We therefore support the call for an international conference on measures to fight the illicit transfer of small arms.

The United Nations system has a major role to play in this area, and we know that the tasks facing the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs are not easy. Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala's experience in these areas gives us all hope, and we support the initiatives he has already taken in every area under his responsibility.

The delegation of Uruguay believes that greater transparency and greater openness in the area of armaments are keys to building confidence among States.

As soon as its work for 1999 begins, the Conference on Disarmament must consider the matter of expansion of its membership. The time has come for States to make their contributions to the cause of peace, and any argument against this is inadmissible. We appeal to present members of the Conference to reconsider modernizing that body on an urgent basis.

I reiterate my country's commitment to the cause of general and complete disarmament. We believe that progress already made must be consolidated, and that progress yet to be made must be made as soon as possible. Uruguay firmly believes in replacing the culture of conflict with a culture of peace, and will support all efforts to that end.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): Since this is the first time I am addressing the Committee under your chairmanship, Sir, let me congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to serve the Committee. I have no doubt, Sir, that, with your diplomatic skill and competence, you will be able to steer the work of this Committee with all due vigour. Allow me also to pay tribute to your predecessor, my brother from Botswana, Ambassador Mothusi Nkgowe, for the way in which he managed the work of the Committee last year. I take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the comprehensive statement he delivered on Monday, 12 October 1998.

Disarmament is one area which the international community cannot ignore, since it remains the cornerstone of this world body, the United Nations. So long as weapons of mass destruction remain in our midst, it is inconceivable to talk about stability in the world.

The instability of the world has been heightened by recent developments in South Asia. These developments have confirmed our fears concerning the lack of universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). There is an urgent need to address the issue of the universality of that regime, in order to avoid the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Hence the need to remove the climate of uncertainty. The non-proliferation regime can be effective only if accompanied by a serious commitment to negotiate in multilateral forums a mechanism that would lead to general and complete disarmament. Developments in South Asia have demonstrated once again that weapons of mass destruction remain a threat to the existence of mankind.

Namibia signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) here at the United Nations in September 1996 because we believed that the Treaty demonstrated the resolve of the international community to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons. In that connection, my delegation welcomes the announcements made by the Prime Ministers of India and of Pakistan on moving towards adherence to the CTBT. These are positive developments which will eventually lead to the early entry into force of the Treaty and to its universality. It is also important to give full support, financial and otherwise, to the development and functioning of the international monitoring system in order to enable the verification regime to be effective. Namibia will continue to honour its commitment to the Organization.

It is unfair to talk about curbing the proliferation of nuclear weapons without addressing the elimination of those weapons. While the cold war ended almost a decade ago, progress towards the elimination of nuclear weapons leaves much to be desired. At the bilateral level, there has been little progress between the United States of America and the Russian Federation as far as the Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START II) is concerned. We call for the ratification of the START II treaty, so as to make possible the immediate commencement and early conclusion of a START III process. It is my delegation's sincerest hope that once negotiations have been completed on a START III treaty, the two largest nuclear-weapon States will be able to work on further reductions of their nuclear arsenals.

The menace of anti-personnel landmines has continued to wreak havoc and to cause untold suffering to innocent civilians. Some southern African States, including my own country, Namibia, are victims of these mines, something that hampers not only the utilization of productive agricultural land but also the delivery of goods and services to the areas affected by this menace. In keeping with its commitment to international humanitarian law, Namibia signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction in October 1997 and ratified it in September 1998. Namibia is gratified by the Mozambican Government's offer to hold the first meeting of States parties, in Maputo in May 1999. It is my ardent hope that we will as many States as possible will become signatories of the Convention before the Maputo meeting. Since this issue is of international humanitarian concern, my delegation is asking for a commitment by all States to sign and ratify the Ottawa Convention as a way of saving our citizens from the untold suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines.

However, as the campaign for ratification of the Convention gains momentum, we should not lose sight of the urgent need to demine the countries that are seriously affected by or infested with landmines. By the same token, the international community should continue to render all necessary humanitarian assistance to the victims of these deadly weapons.

Small arms and light weapons and their proliferation are a source of concern to my Government. The outbreak of internal conflicts has made it possible for these weapons to be in good supply, thus making it impossible, even after the conflicts have stopped, to control and regulate the supply of these weapons. In some parts of the world, small arms and light weapons are, unfortunately, a lucrative business. Thus, in order to curb the illicit transfer of these weapons, concerted efforts by regional groups are needed to put into place a mechanism which would bring about a legally binding instrument. My delegation welcomes the efforts of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and light weapons and its recommendation to convene an international conference to deal with this matter.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of the Holy See.

Mr. Martino (Holy See)*:* As this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship and the members of the Bureau on their election. I am certain that under your expert leadership the work of this Committee will come to a successful conclusion.

The international community has in recent times witnessed some positive, although modest, trends in disarmament. An anti-personnel-landmine treaty has come into existence, and all those who worked to make this a reality deserve congratulations. Unknown numbers of innocent civilians, particularly children, will be spared the cruel maiming and death caused by these evil instruments. The Holy See, which expeditiously ratified the treaty, calls on all nations to do the same.

The Holy See notes another recent gain in the new momentum given to the issue of small arms. Small arms bring violent death, injury and psychological trauma to hundreds of thousands of people each year. These simple and comparatively inexpensive weapons of death find their way into areas of conflict and instability and, shockingly, even into the hands of children, who are locked into a culture of violence. Casualties often occur in the context of religious, ethnic, political and national conflicts, which result in millions of refugees and internally displaced persons. The weaponization of society fuels cycles of violence, despair and, ultimately, State collapse. Thus the establishment of the United Nations group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms to work alongside the Vienna Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice is a positive step forward.

At the recent meeting held in Oslo, Government officials agreed that Governments have the primary responsibility for reducing the flow and accumulation of small arms. A study by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace noted the anomaly by which certain States have stringent controls on the international transfer of heavy arms, but few, if any, regarding the sale of small arms and on guns. The supply of small arms must be regulated at its source at the same time as efforts are being made to lessen the demand and to choke off access to illicit supplies. In certain areas, there is an urgent need to ensure a more effective control of stockpiles. Furthermore, the sale of excess supplies of small arms and light weapons, rendered redundant either through modernization or reduction in the size of military forces, can lead, in a cascading effect, to an ongoing flow of sophisticated arms from developed to developing countries.

Since society also has an important role to play — for the human cost of small-arms casualties is a societal issue — reduced arms expenditures and increased health-care costs could enable more resources to be directed

towards sustainable development programmes. The strain on public health-care facilities in affected areas would be relieved, and the physical and mental health of individuals and families improved. Recent efforts to bring together those who deal with international arms control and disarmament, humanitarian law, peace and security, public health, gun control, international development and conflict resolution are hopeful signs of a new global awareness.

The Holy See appeals in particular for increased measures to be taken to effectively identify those individuals and groups who traffic in arms outside all bounds of legal control and who, through their activity, unscrupulously contribute to violence and instability. More decisive international police and intelligence cooperation is required. A reliable system of marking small arms would make tracking more effective. All Governments must ensure maximum transparency and absolute respect for their own norms and the norms of the international community concerning arms transfers, especially to conflict areas.

Turning to the nuclear-weapons field, the worthy initiative by eight States from different areas of the world, which have formed a coalition on a new agenda, is a welcome advance. They have called on the Governments of the nuclear-weapon States and the nuclear-weapon-capable States to commit themselves unequivocally to the elimination of nuclear weapons and to agree to start work immediately on the practical steps and negotiations required for its achievement. In this context, the development of the Middle Powers Initiative, a coalition of prominent international non-governmental organizations, is also welcome. It aims at encouraging the Governments of the nuclear-weapon States and the nuclear-weapon-capable States to move rapidly to a nuclear-weapon-free world.

A measure of progress was made this year in the tentative agreement reached at the Conference on Disarmament to establish committee discussions on a fissile material cut-off treaty. This work would be enhanced by a general recognition that steps towards non-proliferation must go hand in hand with steps to disarmament. The activation of the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs signals the higher priority that the United Nations itself will give to disarmament activities. We wish a successful outcome to the good work of Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala.

The review of positive developments I have just given should fill us with encouragement for the future. A distinct mark of our time, however, is that the work of disarmament is proceeding slowly. But an offsetting trend of negative development is slowing us down further. These negative trends must be identified in order for us to take action. Foremost is the breakdown in the preparatory process for the year 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In two sessions, held over two years, the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference has struggled to find an acceptable format for deliberations on nuclear disarmament. The debates on terminology, subsidiary bodies and schedules are but a surrogate for the real debate over a comprehensive programme to eliminate nuclear weapons.

It is not just the NPT that is in trouble. The impasse in the ratification processes of both START II and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty bespeak the lingering resistance to disarmament. Further progress is inhibited by the failure to consolidate hard-earned gains. The testing of nuclear weapons by States which stand outside the NPT exacerbates the danger caused by a weak non-proliferation regime. Nuclear testing by any nation is to be deplored. Criticism of those who test, however, does not deal adequately with the central problem.

The central problem is the determination of nuclear-weapon States to carry their nuclear weapons into the twenty-first century, despite their obligation under the NPT to negotiate nuclear disarmament. The continued existence of 30,000 nuclear weapons almost a decade after the end of the cold war poses a grave danger to humanity. This is further worsened by the fact that 5,000 of these weapons are on alert status, meaning they are capable of being fired at 30 minutes' notice. The danger of nuclear catastrophe through accident or terrorism is an unacceptable risk.

Nothing reveals the negative trends in disarmament as clearly as the continued insistence that nuclear weapons are essential to national security. To make the exaggerated claim that nuclear weapons are an aid to peace can only provoke other States to do the same. I would like to recall the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which says that States have an obligation to conclude negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. Moreover, what is deeply troubling is the prospect of a new nuclear arms race. The modernization programmes of those who already have nuclear weapons, combined with the acquisition of nuclear weapons by other States and research now going on in still other States, plunges the world into more danger than that which existed even during the cold war. The longer this situation continues, the more a

growing number of States will falsely claim that nuclear weapons are legitimate.

The Holy See has stated before, and states again, that nuclear weapons are incompatible with the peace we seek for the twenty-first century. They cannot be justified; they deserve condemnation. The preservation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons demands an unequivocal commitment to their abolition.

My delegation believes that the world must move further and further towards the abolition of nuclear weapons through a universal non-discriminatory ban, with intensive inspection by a universal authority. This process would begin with the nuclear-weapon States committing themselves unequivocally to the elimination of nuclear weapons and without delay pursuing in good faith and bringing to a conclusion negotiations to this end.

Practical steps to move this process forward should be taken immediately, such as de-alerting and deactivating nuclear weapons. A pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons should be made as an interim step by every State possessing nuclear weapons. Furthermore, it would be a constructive step to hold an international conference on nuclear disarmament in which both Governments and civil society could unite their strength to develop the political will to take the courageous steps necessary for abolition.

The great task ahead for the twenty-first century is to move the world from a culture of violence and war to a culture of peace. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNE 'CO) has already taken the lead in promoting a culture of peace. This consists of promoting values, attitudes and behaviours reflecting and describing social interaction and sharing, based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, human rights, tolerance and solidarity. Rather than intervening in violent conflicts after they have erupted and then engaging in post-conflict peace-building, it is more humane and more efficient to prevent such violence in the first place by addressing its roots.

Let it not be said that the promotion of a culture of peace, the rooting out of the causes of violence and the abolition of nuclear weapons are unreachable goals. The world has rid itself of the evils of legalized slavery, legalized colonialism and legalized apartheid. Those were eliminated as a result of rising global awareness and political determination. So, too, must the growing momentum to make nuclear weapons illegitimate and eliminate them now be accompanied by political action by all States. Humanity deserves no less from us.

Mr. Palihakkara (Sri Lanka): My delegation wishes to congratulate you most warmly, Mr. Chairman, on your election. We are assured of a productive session under your leadership.

As we begin this year's session, the temptation to draw up a balance sheet of the achievements and concerns relevant to disarmament and international security may appear even more pronounced. While it would be rather simplistic to assess the complex multilateral disarmament agenda by taking a debit-and-credit approach, one cannot belittle achievements and wish away problems. As you observed in your opening statement, Mr. Chairman, one need not be overly pessimistic.

First of all, we have seen more positive reportage from the Conference on Disarmament this year than was possible the year before. Ad hoc committees were established to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty and to address the long-standing issue of negative security assurances. Consultations have also been under way on the questions of outer space, transparency in armaments and anti-personnel landmines. In the treaty areas, the Chemical Weapons Convention is being operationalized through some intensive work by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague, while important work has also been accomplished in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. We have also received the positive news that the work on a compliance protocol to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention has made some headway. My delegation, however, wishes that there were broader-based consultation processes for expediting these negotiations.

Sri Lanka welcomes Brazil's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). With 187 States parties, the NPT represents the broadest-based treaty regime committed to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

While these positive developments have been acknowledged, the international community remains concerned over the lack of tangible movement on the core issue of nuclear disarmament. Consultations on this pivotal question in the Conference on Disarmament remain inconclusive and are undefined in terms of its eventual goal. On the bilateral plane, the START process seems to have stagnated. The nuclear-weapon States appear to be trapped in their own argument that the question of nuclear

disarmament, while being a matter of concern to all, should nevertheless remain within the exclusive purview of the possessors. The important consensus the international community achieved at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to chart a course towards the elimination of nuclear weapons seems to have lost its way in this seemingly circular argument about the negotiating or deliberative competence.

While deliberations and negotiations on nuclear disarmament remain virtually paralysed, doctrines have continued to evolve, upholding the further utility of nuclear weapons, despite the fact that the cold war rationale for nuclear arsenals has ceased to exist any more. This is a trend that can be reversed only by activating a multilateral nuclear disarmament process which will pave the way for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons — a goal the international community has unreservedly endorsed in various international treaties and at various international conferences.

Sri Lanka has consistently contributed to the consensus-building process in the international security debate, within and outside the United Nations, beginning with the historic first special session devoted to disarmament, in 1978. We earnestly hope that the current session of the First Committee will produce a pragmatic and well-focused set of decisions and pronouncements that will avoid redundancies and diffusion of focus. Our output this year should outline a framework for international action to achieve the commonly shared goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

We have seen a number of well-intentioned and carefully crafted proposals emanating from the current session that deal with the many complex aspects of the nuclear disarmament process. We support the general thrust of these initiatives. We hope that this can be harmonized through a transparent consultation process so that the First Committee can come up with a set of cogent and well-defined recommendations addressed to a series of bodies and events that will address this all-important nuclear disarmament issue in the period leading to the next millennium. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, the NPT Review Conference in the year 2000 and the proposed special session on disarmament must all work in tandem and coherently in order for the positive synergies of these proposals and the political momentum they generate to be harmonized and put to optimal use to advance a broad-based nuclear disarmament process.

My Government has stated its views on nuclear tests in South Asia. This is consistent with our long-standing policy of speaking against continued nuclear-test explosions by any country in any part of the world. We are pleased to note the statements made by India and Pakistan at the highest levels concerning their positive attitude towards joining the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and their decision to join the Conference on Disarmament negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

This brings me to the necessity to avoid acrimonious debate over issues, however complex and contentious they might be, in addressing international security questions that impinge on the vital security interests of countries. A more pragmatic process of engaging countries to promote de-escalation, cessation of testing, confidence-building and disarmament rather than further acrimony based on selectivity would be the course we advocate in dealing with this situation in the post-test period. We believe that the First Committee's duty is to encourage this process of de-escalation, confidence-building and engagement through multilateral, bilateral and other forms of dialogue. We hope that the resolutions on the subject of nuclear tests will follow this positive and more pragmatic approach, rather than an acrimonious one.

The post-cold-war period has brought about developments in the international security domain that clearly demonstrate that the old agenda is not fully equipped to deal with the newly emerging challenges. Priorities, too, need adaptation in accordance with current realities. One of the main security challenges in the post-cold-war era is the phenomenon of the illicit arms trade, which seems to be driving many a conflict around the globe. It is true to say that weapons by themselves do not wage war, that people do. Nevertheless, illicit arms, terrorism and illegal fund-raising abroad have become self-supporting cycles sustaining conflicts, particularly in the developing world. This has not only brought about a major security challenge within and among States, but has also resulted in raising the toll in a large number of conflicts that are ongoing even today.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his address in 1995 to the World Summit for Social Development, described this unprecedented challenge as a supranational subversive threat to international peace and security. The nexus between illicit arms trade and international criminal organizations clearly points to the need to address the problem as a matter requiring specific international cooperative measures. This can no longer be

treated as a law-and-order problem relegated to the limited capabilities and authority of national law enforcement bodies. The manifestations of the illicit arms trade have assumed disturbing transnational dimensions. The forces and technologies that drive the globalization processes may be unwittingly supporting the activities of criminal groups that indulge in this activity. We therefore believe that it is time for the First Committee to initiate some specific action through the General Assembly to place this issue squarely on the international agenda. We hope that a focus and specific recommendation on this issue will emerge from our deliberations this year.

The United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, on which Sri Lanka has been honoured to serve, has made a comprehensive analysis of complex aspects of this problems. We will continue to actively participate in that exercise to further examine the question, with a view to making recommendations for measures on international cooperation.

We would like to commend the Department for Disarmament Affairs for its initiative to establish a focal point for coordination on small arms. My delegation would like to urge the Department to accord priority to illicit arms trade issues in their work.

We are also gratified to note the adoption by the member States of the Organization of American States of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials. This is a ground-breaking instrument of international cooperation against a clear and present security threat.

We have also noted with appreciation the role being undertaken within the framework of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to develop measures to combat illicit trafficking in firearms and explosives to be incorporated into a protocol to the convention against organized transnational crime.

Like the delegation of Colombia, we believe that such actions on a broad front will further strengthen the international community's resolve to combat the problem of illicit arms.

Statements in this debate and the documentation before the Committee signify the growing support for the proposal to hold an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects. We are also grateful to the Government of Switzerland for offering to host and provide facilities for this conference. Judging from the replies received from a large number of Member States, it is clear that there is a wide measure of support for the First Committee's making a positive pronouncement on the holding of this international conference as soon as possible. It would be necessary to agree on a thorough preparatory process, as well as to develop sound technical inputs, including through the valuable work being undertaken by the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts.

Turning now to another item on our agenda, my delegation hopes that the positive attitude that prevailed in the consultations relating to the prevention of an arms race in outer space will bear fruit this year by producing a forward-looking resolution on this subject. This item has continued to enjoy extremely broad-based support in the Conference on Disarmament, where an overwhelming majority of delegations supported the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee on this subject. Sri Lanka, together with the delegation of Egypt, hopes to submit a draft resolution on this agenda item that will hopefully facilitate a consensus in the 1999 session of the Conference on Disarmament that will enable more productive work in an ad hoc committee.

My delegation would also like to express its appreciation of the work being undertaken by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. Sri Lanka has been an active participant in a number of programmes initiated by the Centre in Kathmandu, and we value their contribution to the process of promoting awareness and confidence-building in the region.

If we have been selective in dealing with only a few items on the agenda of the First Committee, it is not because we downgrade the priorities attached to others. We sought to highlight what we consider topical in terms of new challenges faced by many developing and non-aligned countries as they seek to grapple with the multiplicity of developments in the post-cold-war period over which they have little or no control. It is through international cooperation and an enlightened multilateral process of deliberation and negotiation that the international community can deal with the contemporary challenges in a world buffeted by the forces of globalization. The developed countries and the nuclear-weapon States should be just as interested in making this multilateral process a success, since insecurity or volatility anywhere can pose a threat to stability and well-being everywhere.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): We are delighted that a distinguished expert from the Conference on

Disarmament in Geneva has come to preside over this session. Please accept our sincere congratulations, Mr. Chairman. At the same time, following a hallowed Asian tradition, I hope you will allow me to begin with an apology: I apologize if my remarks this morning come across as the views of an uninformed layman.

When we laymen feel a little lost in a new field, we sometimes turn to the time-honoured wisdom that is contained in old fables and fairy tales. Their very endurance over time suggests that an essential kernel of truth is contained in them. Take, for example, the story of the three little pigs. The first pig built a house of straw. Along came the wolf, and he huffed and he puffed and he blew the house down. The second pig built a house of wood. The wolf huffed and puffed and again blew down the house. The third pig built a house of bricks. This time, no matter how hard the wolf huffed and puffed, the house of bricks did not fall.

The moral of this tale is clear. There is safety in brick houses and solid defences. But this moral is, in some ways, at variance with the assumptions behind much of the work we do in the Committee. In this Committee we rarely counsel countries to build brick houses and solid defences. Instead, we generally ask them to disarm, brick by brick.

To avoid any misunderstanding, let me stress at the very outset that this remark should not be taken to mean that Singapore does not support disarmament efforts. We certainly do. Singapore is a very small State. In the animal kingdom, shrimp do not attack whales. Neither do small States pose any security threat to the rest of the world. All we crave is a peaceful and stable environment in which we can pursue national development and economic growth. This is why we support international disarmament efforts.

We have signed a number of important disarmament conventions, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions. We have been a strong supporter of nuclear disarmament. I am also pleased to inform the Committee today that Singapore will sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in early 1999. We participate regularly in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and we have sent an expert to participate in the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. Singapore has strict laws against the illicit ownership and transfer of arms and ammunition.

In addition to promoting disarmament, we promote peace. At the regional level, years of cooperation and confidence-building have resulted in a comfortable relationship among the countries of South-East Asia. Since the inception of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967, there has not been any armed conflict between any two members of ASEAN. ASEAN countries have also signed a Treaty to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia, a Treaty that entered into force in 1997. ASEAN has also launched the ASEAN Regional Forum to promote peace and stability in the wider East Asian region. We will certainly continue with these efforts.

But even as we in the Committee rush to promote disarmament, we should balance it with a healthy respect for the realities of history. Even though the real wolves may be facing extinction in their natural environment, the metaphorical wolves continue to prowl through human societies all around the world, and they continue to prey on the weak and defenceless. Armed conflict is not likely to disappear soon. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan said recently, Isaiah's words

> "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, ...
> nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
> neither shall they learn war any more." *(The Holy Bible, Isaiah 2:4)*

will never be more than an ideal for humanity.

The first thought, therefore, that I would like to leave with this Committee is that, even as we promote disarmament here, we must ensure that the weak and defenceless, especially the small States, are not prematurely disarmed. Please allow us to build our brick houses first.

The second thought is a slightly paradoxical one. It is best captured in Max Weber's famous remark:

> "It is not true that good can only follow from good and evil from evil, but that often the opposite is true. Anyone who fails to see this is, indeed, a political infant."

Max Weber made this remark a long time before this Committee was created. But if he were alive today and watching the proceedings of this Committee, he might once again remind us to heed his remark. He could, for example, challenge a basic underlying premise of much of our work here: that the road to peace is paved with disarmament. As a scholar of Latin he could well have reminded us of the famous remark of Vegetius, a military

strategist of the fourth century AD, who said, "He who desires peace should prepare for war".

It would, of course, have been politically incorrect for him to make such a remark in this Committee. But as a philosopher who studied human society by observing both words and deeds, Max Weber could have defended himself by pointing not to the words but to the deeds of the most advanced and sophisticated developed nations of our world today. Out of the total global military expenditure of $796 billion, North America alone accounts for 34 per cent, while the 14 European members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) make up 23 per cent. By contrast, the 132 members of the Group of 77 contribute only 16 per cent to global military expenditure. By a strange and curious correlation, most of the developed countries are at peace and enjoying a previously unseen degree of peace and security, while most of today's conflicts occur in the developing world. Any objective social scientist might therefore conclude that there is an empirical correlation, not between peace and disarmament, but between peace and armament.

But as there are many historians in the room today, I am sure we would all agree that the real reasons why most developed nations are enjoying unprecedented peace are complex. Some continents have been exhausted by two World Wars. Others experienced peace for many years after the Second World War because of the so-called balance of terror. In another curious paradox of history, the biggest and most dangerous weapons ever produced by mankind — indeed, the only weapons that could destroy all mankind — have prevented a direct conflict between the two most militarily powerful nation States seen in the history of man. Of course, the successful economic development of many developed States, with the creation of large and broad bands of middle classes with a strong vested interest in peace, is another important explanation for peace in the developed world. And today, even as we speak, the enormous and relentless force of globalization — from which many of us feel otherwise threatened — may curiously be the most powerful force for producing global peace, because this force of globalization could shrink our world into a tiny little global village in which our interest in working together peacefully will grow by leaps and bounds.

It is clear, therefore, that the road to peace is a complex one, and it is these very complexities we should be promoting and discussing today. We live in a varied world where some live in brick houses, but where most live in straw homes or wooden huts. But in a curious reversal of the wisdom contained in the ancient fable, it is the citizens who live in brick houses who advise those living in straw homes and wooden homes to disarm.

Recent developments have shown us that we are still far from a world free of nuclear weapons. The nuclear-weapon States have continued to object to the elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. Recognizing that the major Powers will not surrender the nuclear option, disarmament activists have now turned their attention to other categories of conventional weapons, the "bows and arrows" that constitute the rudimentary defence of most countries. Layer by layer, these efforts could undermine the basic ability of States to defend themselves or to maintain domestic law and order.

Allow me to illustrate my point with another example. We all agree that deforestation has damaging effects on the environment. It removes the much-needed protective cover from the topsoil, leaving the earth susceptible to the forces of erosion. Disarmament, taken to the extreme, can have the same effect of depriving nations of their protective cover, leaving them vulnerable to the smallest forces of destruction. At what point does disarmament become a deforestation of national security?

We have absolutely no doubt that the non-governmental organizations that counsel such disarmament mean well. They mean to do good and not to do harm. They hope to save lives, not to destroy them. In many cases, their good intentions have produced good results. But as Max Weber reminded us a long time ago, this is not always the case.

We live in a complex world. Some of us live in safe neighbourhoods; many do not. Some of us are surrounded by equally peaceful neighbours. Singapore is lucky to be a member of the peaceful ASEAN community. Others live near wolves. It is for this reason that virtually all United Nations Member States, with the exception of a very few, maintain armed forces. The legitimate right to self-defence is set out in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

At the same time, there are very few safety nets in the contemporary world to protect those who live in wooden huts and straw homes. One of these safety nets is, of course, the United Nations Charter, as well as the United Nations organs that implement the provisions of the Charter. The higher the standing and effectiveness of the United Nations in the international community, the more protected the small States feel. Consequently, when either the United Nations Charter or the United Nations as an

Organization is weakened, the security of small States is naturally diminished.

Curiously, it is once again the citizens who live in brick houses today who are tearing holes in the safety net of the United Nations, either by damaging the prestige of the Organization or by not paying their dues to the United Nations. It is surely shocking that the wealthiest State of the world is unable to pay its dues to the United Nations. The results are clear. The United Nations has been weakened in recent years; so too has the safety net that protects small, weak States. I am not sure whether there are any wolves outside watching this process happen. If there are, they must surely be puzzled at the sight of small States being asked to disarm even as the fragile safety net protecting them is being torn.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that all of us in this room share the common goal of promoting peace or, to quote the opening words of the United Nations Charter, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Let us work together to find the best roads to reach this goal, but let us not assume that there are only simple direct paths to take. The search for peace, as both the lessons of history and the wisdom of fables have taught us, is elusive and complex. Let us not ignore these complexities in this Committee's deliberations and let us always ensure that, in the course of our work here, we enhance and do not diminish the security of small States.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): It is a pleasure to convey my warm congratulations to you, Sir, and to the other members of the Bureau for your outstanding election to guide the work of the Committee. In you, we recognize a seasoned diplomat whose long experience will guarantee the success of our work.

We also thank your predecessor, Ambassador Nkgowe of Botswana, for the remarkable manner in which he led the work of the First Committee at the past session. I also wish to thank Mr. Dhanapala for his laudable efforts at the head of the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat.

It is customary for us, when we meet each year, to strive to consolidate the success and achievements attained in the sphere of disarmament and to seek and clear the path for new specific achievements in this area, which affects not only the security and stability of States, but also human beings and their very existence, including their inner well-being.

Like many other countries, Tunisia is working to achieve the objective of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The international community assumed this goal several decades ago and the end of the cold war gave rise to a new world geopolitical environment conducive to its achievement. The important steps taken in the area of disarmament in the course of this decade confirm that trend. We wish specifically to recall the conclusion of the START I and START II treaties between the United States and Russia and, at the multilateral level, the conclusion and entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Certainly, the year that has elapsed since the last session of this Committee has seen positive developments. In the sphere of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, we note with satisfaction the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to establish an Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty for military usage. We hope that these negotiations will rapidly lead to the conclusion of a treaty to serve as a regime for nuclear non-proliferation and as a true instrument for promoting nuclear disarmament. We note with interest the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish its Ad Hoc Committee to draft a treaty on unconditional and binding security guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States. This arises in conjunction with the conclusion last December of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

However, this progress should not allow us to forget that a great deal remains to be done in order to attain the ultimate objective of general and complete disarmament. Among the most important tasks on the international community's agenda is nuclear disarmament. The General Assembly has called for this in its many annual resolutions on the issue, and also and most importantly in the Final Document of its first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The vast majority of non-nuclear-weapon States, particularly the non-aligned countries, have made numerous urgent appeals for nuclear disarmament, the last of which was recently launched from Durban, South Africa, by the heads of State and Government of those countries. In 1996, the International Court of Justice rendered its well-known Advisory Opinion concluding that the nuclear States have an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under

international control. Other forums, such as the Canberra Commission, have emphasized the urgent need for nuclear disarmament.

A broad consensus is thus emerging with regard to the need for the total and definitive eradication of nuclear weapons. The end of the cold war made this goal more attainable to the international community, while the impetus arising from the new world environment of the 1990s offers us a valuable opportunity to move firmly towards genuine nuclear disarmament. The nuclear Powers are urged to react positively to all these appeals by promoting progress in nuclear disarmament, in conformity with the commitments they have undertaken in the context of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and of the decision on the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, adopted following the 1995 Conference of States Parties to the NPT.

In this context, we stress the importance of the nuclear Powers' pursuing determined efforts on the bilateral and multilateral levels, which are complementary, not antinomic. We encourage bilateral agreements in the area of nuclear disarmament, such as the START agreements between the United States and Russia. START II should be ratified and enter into force as soon as possible in order to open the way to the conclusion of START III and to allow for further reductions of strategic nuclear arsenals on the part of both the major nuclear Powers. We call open the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. It is urgent to make substantial progress towards world-wide nuclear disarmament, as recent events in South Asia have once again shown.

Regional nuclear disarmament is a key factor in consolidating international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament efforts and also makes a considerable contribution to strengthening the foundations of regional peace and security. In that regard, my country has consistently supported efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones. Tunisia has worked towards the establishment of denuclearized zones; it was among the first countries to sign the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty and was pleased by the conclusion of the Bangkok Treaty establishing the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. We welcome the fact that these two zones follow upon previous nuclear-weapon-free zones in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the South Pacific.

Yet in the Middle East Israel continues to block attainment of the goal of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region, in spite of the many appeals made not only by other States of the region but also by the General Assembly, which has adopted by consensus a number of resolutions on this matter, and in spite of the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Today, despite the accession of other States of the region to the NPT, Israel remains outside the Treaty and refuses to accede to it. Israel continues to refuse to place its nuclear installations under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, thus posing a grave ongoing threat to the security of the countries and peoples of the region, and perpetuating a flagrant imbalance in its favour by being the sole possessor of a nuclear capacity beyond all international controls.

Turning to conventional weapons, Tunisia welcomes the conclusion last year at Ottawa of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. This is an important disarmament instrument, which would eliminate an entire category of weapons that is notorious for its ravages among civilian populations. My country was among the first to sign the Convention at Ottawa, and is actively pursuing the ratification process. We hope to deposit our instrument of ratification soon, and we welcome the prospect of the Convention's entry into force next March.

The illicit trafficking in and circulation of small arms pose a threat to national and regional security and contributes to the destabilization of States. The efforts by States to combat this phenomenon must go hand in hand with determined action by the international community at large. My country supports the efforts of regional and international organizations such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations. We consider that international action should be placed under United Nations auspices.

Tunisia has a special interest in the question of enlargement of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament. Tunisia is a peace-loving country that is a party to all the multilateral disarmament treaties and that is deeply committed to the cause of disarmament and to strengthening the foundations of international peace and security. It has aspired for years to membership of the Conference on Disarmament, the sole forum for negotiating multilateral disarmament treaties. We consider that all countries with a legitimate desire to join that body as full

members, such as Tunisia, should have the opportunity to do so. This would further strengthen the representative nature and universality of the Conference, and we call on that body to continue its consultations with a view to adopting a decision on admitting five new members at its first meeting of 1999.

Strengthening the foundations of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region is a top priority to which Tunisia devotes tireless and constant effort. Tunisia embraces the universal values of democracy, tolerance and openness, which define the political and social system that governs our balanced, unified society and that inspires our foreign policy. We tenaciously play an active role in the Mediterranean region, and work with determination to strengthen the basis of a broad-based and multidimensional partnership between the two shores of the basin. While we favour the economic and social development of the southern shore, it is only partnership that can enable the entire region to address the common challenges facing it, such as terrorism and all other forms of extremism, organized crime, drug trafficking, illegal migration and many others. Such partnership must be built by all States of the Mediterranean basin together with the goal of lasting cooperation and security, which will turn this cradle of civilizations into a true lake of peace and prosperity. It is this comprehensive approach with its interwoven and interdependent elements that motivates my country's participation in the Euro-Mediterranean process and that will continue to guide our actions in the future.

I pledge my delegation's full readiness to cooperate with you, Sir, in ensuring the success of the work of the First Committee. As in other disarmament forums, Tunisia will persevere in its commitment to the cause of disarmament and to the building of a more secure world.

Mr. Botnaru (Republic of Moldova): Allow me, Sir, to associate myself with the congratulations already addressed to you on your election to the post of Chairman of the First Committee this year. I am confident that your leadership and wisdom will guide the Committee's work to a fruitful conclusion. I take this opportunity to assure you that my delegation will spare no effort in supporting you and in contributing to the work of the Committee.

In his statement at the opening of the general debate in the First Committee, the Secretary-General spoke of the connection between disarmament and development. We welcome that approach to disarmament issues. The Republic of Moldova, having passed through conflict and still facing the problems of the post-conflict period, has experienced the full truth of the fact that disarmament is essential for effective conflict-prevention and for post-conflict reconstruction, and that conflict is the greatest enemy of development everywhere. We have seen how even a small-arms race economically devastates the conflict area through the diversion of skills and resources from development. Hence, the principle of the connection between disarmament and development is applicable in cases of conflict, and is even more significant with respect to the nuclear arms race. That is why our common endeavours to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world should be strengthened and accelerated. Success in this field will liberate more human resources for tasks of progress and development, thus ensuring peace and security in the world.

In this regard, the international community should make every effort to maintain and further strengthen the existing nuclear non-proliferation regime by securing the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It is also important that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) should enter into force at the earliest possible date.

My country cannot but share the concern that many representatives have expressed during this session of the First Committee that the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction continues to threaten regional and global security. At the same time, we welcome the pragmatic proposals made by several countries; these should help move the disarmament process forward. We support the view that the nuclear non-proliferation regime can be promoted only if associated with the promotion of nuclear disarmament. Those two regimes, non-proliferation and disarmament, should be implemented in parallel.

We believe that the step-by-step approach of taking concrete and realistic measures is the most balanced one for achieving positive results in this respect. At the same time, we consider that the disarmament process, in order to be effective, should include, in a comprehensive way, all types of weapons.

The Republic of Moldova welcomes the work under way in Vienna to make the verification regime completely functional as soon as the CTBT enters into force. The recent developments in South Asia related to the testing of nuclear arms indicate that these efforts are of major importance. We also share the view that the vitality of the NPT Treaty depends on the success of the new preparatory process for future NPT Review Conferences. These steps will ensure, in our view, the coherent and consistent application of the NPT regime's basic principles.

We believe that the nuclear-disarmament measures taken by Member States of their own initiative or collectively provide a conducive environment to further nuclear disarmament by others. We welcome these events. At the same time, we are of the view that all other steps that are not in line with such efforts are aimed at undermining the very foundation of the NPT and disarmament regime, regardless of what arguments are advanced.

Among the positive developments in the process of disarmament and international security, we are pleased to mention the fissile material cut-off treaty, which would make a significant contribution to both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We welcome the establishment last August of an Ad Hoc Committee entrusted with negotiations on this treaty within the Conference on Disarmament. This is important for ensuring the coherence of our efforts regarding the process. We consider that the control of fissile material by the international community will ensure the prevention of the further production of nuclear weapons. That is why it is so crucial to strengthen the NPT and adopt a fissile material cut-off treaty in order to move towards a reduction of nuclear weapons.

We call upon the nuclear-weapon States to make further concrete efforts to reduce their nuclear weapons with a view to achieving the ultimate goal of eliminating these arsenals. In this respect, we welcome both the recent progress made by the United States and Russia in nuclear disarmament and their commitment to move forward the START process.

We consider that regional and subregional initiatives should also be encouraged and run parallel to international efforts in achieving peace and security in the world. The expansion of regional nuclear-weapon-free zones and the consolidation of existing ones, for example, will contribute to the cause of nuclear non-proliferation.

Regarding chemical and biological weapons, we believe that full compliance of all States parties with the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention is indispensable for attaining the goals of these Conventions. We welcome the fact that the European Union has placed a high priority on the reinforcement of the Biological Weapons Convention, especially regarding a verification regime and its efforts to improve the effectiveness of both Conventions.

In 1992, the Republic of Moldova faced a humanitarian problem caused by the anti-personnel landmines used by the separatist regime in the eastern districts of the country. Moldova, as one of the States afflicted by landmines, understands the importance of efforts by the Ottawa agreement's supporters to eliminate anti-personnel landmines and the humanitarian crises they cause.

Our country looks forward to the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and to that of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and amended Protocol II. The Republic of Moldova also welcomes the initiative to conclude a treaty that prohibits the transfer of anti-personnel landmines. This treaty would be a realistic and significant measure.

Let me mention here that the Republic of Moldova has continued to fulfil its obligations as regards disarmament and the non-proliferation regime. Moldova has signed the NPT Treaty, the Ottawa Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and others. The Republic of Moldova, as a party to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), has carried out all of its obligations related to conventional weapons reduction and verification measures.

With the sporadic outbreak of local conflicts, the excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons has brought immeasurable social and economic dislocation. The illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons is seriously hampering efforts towards post-conflict peace-building. The illicit traffic in and proliferation of small arms constitutes a serious threat to the security and economic development of affected countries and regions. The link between criminal organizations and those dealing with illicit weapons is widely recognized.

The time has come for the international community to consider action-oriented recommendations to combat the problem. An international convention on the issue must commit States to adopt legal measures for the international control of small arms. During the conflict in the eastern districts of the Republic of Moldova, huge quantities of small arms and light weapons moved unchecked from the army's stockpiles into the hands of separatists. Even worse, a broad range of conventional weapons were transferred into their hands. As a result, paramilitary forces were formed in the eastern districts of the country.

In this regard, we welcome the initiatives of Member countries to move towards the establishment of international

norms regarding the disarmament of paramilitary forces. We are ready to consider the elaboration of a draft resolution on this matter and will seek the support of the international community.

We wish to point out that it is mainly through the illicit transfer of arms that the separatist regime from the eastern districts of the country have come to be supported by a strong paramilitary force equipped with armaments from the stockpiles of foreign military forces, which are still located on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. This situation in the region is of great concern to us because the area controlled by the separatist regime is a zone of arms production and trafficking. The arms are produced by enterprises which were part of the industrial-military complex of the former Soviet Union, and they reach conflict zones in some third countries and support criminal structures.

In his statement during the general debate at the current session of the General Assembly, the President of the Republic of Moldova, Mr. Petru Lucinschi, said that

> "on 21 October 1994 the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation signed an agreement on the withdrawal of armaments and military personnel. Unfortunately the Russians have yet to ratify that agreement. Implementation of the agreement would be in line with the letter and the spirit of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, which stipulates the neutrality of our State and bans the deployment of foreign troops on our territory."
> *(A/53/PV.14, p.6)*

We consider also that the continuing presence of huge numbers of conventional foreign armaments on our soil contravenes the relevant CFE Treaty provisions. The decision of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) summits in Budapest and Lisbon on an early and complete withdrawal and the position of the Council of Europe on this subject create the necessary international climate for the withdrawal of the foreign troops.

Another difficult problem which must be solved as a component part of the complete withdrawal of the foreign troops is the return of the armaments and equipment that are now in the possession of the paramilitary forces on the left Dniestr riverbank to their original location.

We consider the unchecked movement of armaments to separatist regimes, whatever the source of such movement, to be another type of arms proliferation that the international community should consider and call special body of United Nations experts to prepare an international conference on this issue. The task is to elaborate strategies aimed at preventing the proliferation of the supply, sale and transfer of small arms and conventional weapons, and particularly at limiting their flow to conflict areas. We believe that the time has come for the United Nations to include in its agenda for disarmament the issue of the proliferation of the transfer of supply of arms to conflict areas and to take appropriate action in order not to allow this type of proliferation to spread throughout the world.

Let me mention in conclusion that the people of the Republic of Moldova, as a part of the former Soviet Union, suffered enormous losses during the cold war because of the lack of progress in the disarmament process. That resulted in a huge waste of our resources and in a diversion from the task of development and of ensuring a better and more secure world for our children.

These days we are facing other challenges on the road to development, and among them is the challenge of the disequilibrium of development.

If during the cold war the divisions were dominated and maintained by the display of nuclear power, at the end of this millennium the divisions within the international community tend to be dominated by huge discrepancies in the level of economic development, which generate conflict and turmoil within the international community. That is a challenge that requires concrete action in order to ensure success. That is why it is so important to accelerate our efforts in the field of disarmament. The time has come to make substantial progress in the field of disarmament and international security so as to be able to concentrate more of our efforts on the task of development — a big challenge that we are facing on the eve of the new millennium.

Ms. Eshmambetova (Kyrgyzstan): My delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Committee and offers its full support to you during our work.

Despite the end of the cold war, the international community still faces a number of challenges as it looks to the new millennium. Widespread hunger and poverty, unemployment, illicit trafficking of drugs, arms smuggling, international terrorism and organized crime are causing social unrest and ethnic conflicts and threatening peace and stability in the world.

Against this background, nothing can justify the continued military spending around the globe, which further exacerbates tensions in various regions. As an Asian country, Kyrgyzstan was deeply disappointed by the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan, actions that fly in the face of the nearly global consensus against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It is with great relief that we have taken note of the intentions of those countries to adhere to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We also welcome the resumption of the India-Pakistan dialogue on the commencement of the fissile material cut-off negotiations, and we view that as a very positive development.

We urge those countries and those that are not members of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to sign and ratify the Treaty and join in the global effort to reduce and eliminate, in a step-by-step manner, under multilateral auspices, all nuclear weapons from our planet. My delegation also welcomes the unilateral and bilateral efforts of the nuclear-weapon States for the reduction of their arsenals: the Strategic Defence Review initiative of the United Kingdom and the agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation on the management and disposal of excessive supplies of plutonium. In our view, the entry into force of START II and the commencement of negotiations on START III could be another positive step in this direction.

The review conference of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in the year 2000 will be a significant event and a historic benchmark in the field of nuclear disarmament. In this regard, we welcome the recent ratification of that Treaty by Australia, Austria, Brazil, France, Germany, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom and urge all States to pave the way for its entry into force and to ban for ever the human and environmental damage these weapons cause.

It is true that the dark mushroom clouds of India and Pakistan had a silver lining in the form of growing support for the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). However, we would prefer to see a cloudless sky over our blue planet and to dream of the time when clouds could bring only rain, not radioactive fallout, and life, not death, to the earth. Although there is still no consensus on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV, there seems to be more understanding on the necessity of a balance between nuclear disarmament, weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons and less argument about the holding of the special session being a luxury because of budgetary constraints.

The harmful effects of armed conflicts are not confined by national borders or limited to the parties directly involved in such conflicts. Rather, they spill over into the broader region and threaten to disrupt peaceful societies. In this regard, the proliferation of small arms is no less dangerous than the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Indeed, in some parts of the world, small arms have turned into weapons of mass destruction, in view of the enormous scale of human casualties among civilian populations. According to the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, 90 per cent of those killed or wounded by small arms are civilians, and 80 per cent of those are women and children. Therefore, my delegation supports the recommendations of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade and welcomes the proposal of Switzerland to host the conference in the year 2000. We also recognize the importance of the process started by the intergovernmental meeting on small arms in Oslo and commend the adoption in November 1997 by the Organization of American States of the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials.

The Kyrgyz Republic seeks to promote all avenues for reducing conflict and promoting global peace and security. It realizes that economic development, not military spending, is the true measure of national achievement. Therefore, my country continues to actively participate in the efforts of the five Central Asian States to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region. In this regard, I wish to refer to the successful conclusion in July 1998 of the Consultative Meeting of Experts of the Central Asian States and the Nuclear-Weapon States, under United Nations auspices, to elaborate acceptable ways and means of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The meeting marked a new stage in the implementation of the Central Asian initiative in that it prepares the legal groundwork for the future treaty.

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to express the sincere gratitude of my delegation to the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, and to the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for their continued support and assistance to the countries of the region in the preparation of the forms and elements of the agreement. My country is also very grateful for the support for the ongoing efforts expressed by many

delegations during the discussions in the First Committee. We urge States in other regions to take similar initiatives towards regional confidence-building and eventual global nuclear disarmament as means of achieving the objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Mr. Guillén (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is a great honour for me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of this Committee, and to congratulate the other members of the Bureau as well. It is also a great pleasure for me to recall the chairmanship of the Ambassador of Botswana during the previous session.

As the Secretary-General has said, the process of reforming the Organization requires disarmament to be considered a priority issue on the global agenda. In this context, we welcome the decision to re-establish the Department for Disarmament Affairs within the Secretariat and the appointment of Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala to direct it.

Peru has given its steadfast support to general and complete disarmament under strict international control as a central component of security and as a goal the international community must attain. We are convinced that the establishment of an international order in line with international law and based on respect for treaty commitments and the principles of the Charter of the Organization is the only way to achieve a world of peace and sustainable development.

Over the past few months certain serious events have occurred in the area of disarmament. In our view, the nuclear tests that were carried out had no valid justification. They have merely reaffirmed our earlier conviction that it is more indispensable today than ever before to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime as established in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

It is essential to curb nuclear proliferation and promote nuclear disarmament under strict international control if we are to achieve the universality of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is vital for the Organization to achieve the universality of that Treaty, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the full implementation in good faith of the commitments undertaken in article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In this context, we welcome in particular Brazil's accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Our country rejects all types of nuclear tests anywhere in the world and believes that they constitute a threat to international peace and security. Peru shares the broad goals and plan of action set out in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998) to deal with the threat of an arms race in South Asia.

In spite of the limited or even non-existent progress that has been made to date at the two meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we believe that efforts must be intensified to ensure that the Conference produces positive results and strengthens the non-proliferation regime to bring about the speedy nuclear disarmament that we all desire. Peru will continue to participate with determination, as it has always done, to reach these objectives.

Today the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice that states that there exists an obligation on the part of all States to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control has more validity and urgency than ever.

We attach particular importance to all initiatives conducive to creating a climate of security, which is an indispensable condition for the achievement of sustainable peace and development.

We are prepared to support the initiative put forward by a group of friendly countries entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda".

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are a valuable tool in support of nuclear disarmament. Peru supports all efforts leading to the strengthening and expansion of these zones. In this connection, we support the initiative of the Central Asian countries to establish a new zone free of nuclear weapons, as well as Mongolia's own proposal. We believe that coordination between the Tlatelolco regime for Latin America and the Caribbean and the regimes of the Treaty of Rarotonga and its Protocols for the South Pacific, of the Pelindaba Treaty for Africa, of the Bangkok Treaty for South-East Asia and of the Antarctic Treaty will contribute to the development and consolidation of those regimes. In this regard, we would once again like to reiterate our support for the quest to make the southern hemisphere a zone free of nuclear weapons, which is gaining more and more momentum.

We should be encouraged by the considerable increase in the number of States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction since it entered into force in April 1997. This is a reflection of the world's growing awareness with regard to the need to work together to ban these perverse weapons. We must continue to support the important work being carried out by the Organization created by the Convention. We encourage those States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention so that it can achieve the necessary universality to be fully effective.

We also share the view and position, held by a large number of States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, that greater efforts should be made to conclude successfully and as soon as possible negotiations on a legally binding instrument to strengthen the effectiveness and implementation of the Convention.

Our country attaches special importance to the non-proliferation not only of weapons of mass destruction, but also of those with indiscriminate effects. That is why we participated actively in the Ottawa process, which in December 1997 culminated in the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. In June of this year we deposited our instrument of ratification, thereby reaffirming our international position in favour of specific disarmament measures that contain a sizeable humanitarian component. Peru associates itself with the many expressions of satisfaction that have been heard from a majority of the world's Governments, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and various international humanitarian organizations regarding the forthcoming entry into force of the Convention. We believe that this is a clear sign of positive change in the international arena. We call for a similar commitment from all Member States of the Organization in this regard. In addition, we will co-sponsor with Canada and numerous countries from various regions a draft resolution to be introduced in the Committee in the coming days that will urge all States to sign and ratify the Convention and thereby achieve its early universal implementation. We also pledge our efforts to see to it that the first meeting of States parties, which will be held in Maputo, Mozambique, will consolidate the progress that has been made in this area and serve to strengthen its future implementation.

Small arms and light weapons, because they are inexpensive, easy to carry, use and maintain, used indiscriminately and often obtained illegally, promote an increase in the level of violence among criminal organizations within countries, place at risk internal, regional and subregional security and threaten the right of peoples to live in peace. One need only bear in mind the information provided both by the Secretary-General and by various organizations showing that the majority of victims of today's internal conflicts are civilians and that their injuries are caused by these types of weapons. This is why Peru considers it necessary for all States — in particular those that produce, export or import small weapons, munitions, explosives and other related materials — to publicly report on the measures that they are taking or should adopt to prevent, combat and eradicate the illegal trafficking in these weapons.

Peru took part in a seminar that was held recently on this subject. In this connection, I would like to emphasize that it is also urgent and indispensable to have a system of cooperation in the area of intelligence — not just among States but also through agreements with specialized institutions — to make possible the detection of unlawful trafficking in these weapons. For its part, our country has adopted internal legislation aimed at dealing with this problem. At the same time, we have worked on a model set of regulations to control international trafficking in firearms, spare parts and ammunition, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States last June. Likewise, in 1997 Peru signed the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials and is now carrying out the appropriate internal procedures to ratify it. We believe that this document can serve as a model for the drafting of an international instrument along these lines, preferably within the framework of the United Nations. We support the initiative by the Secretary-General to convene an international conference on this subject. To this end, we pledge our active and constructive support.

Peru was one of the first countries to strictly comply with the requirement to provide information to the Register of Conventional Arms. We believe the Register is a very valuable instrument for promoting mutual confidence and arms control. However, for it to be truly effective, countries must provide, in timely and continuous fashion, the information required by the Register.

There will be no peace or international security if we ignore social, economic, humanitarian and environmental

issues. For this reason, any action aimed at disarmament must take into account the economic and social development of all the peoples of the world. The resources freed up by disarmament must be used for the development of peoples.

Present developments in the area of regional and global security show that there is a need to strengthen United Nations machinery through a new, revitalized approach linking peace, disarmament and economic and social development. A multilateral approach is the best way to ensure certain and reliable progress.

For all this to happen with the necessary efficiency, there must be a clear, operative link between the United Nations efforts and those of individual regions. It is not possible to get everything done from Headquarters in New York. That is why we believe that the Regional Centres must be the principal actors in this process. In the case of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development located in Peru, its work could be brought into line with today's needs, academic and governmental interaction could be actively promoted through information exchange, currents of opinion could be generated, regional and international agreements could be consolidated, conflicts could be prevented and, in general, peace, disarmament and development could be promoted. The Regional Centre in Peru can do this job, and we believe it can do it without unduly burdening the United Nations.

The declaration by the heads of State at the recent summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Durban, South Africa, and the decision of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly to maintain and revitalize the Regional Centres encourage us to continue with the efforts we have been making to revitalize the Regional Centre headquartered in Lima. We are confident that the Centre will soon resume its work.

The Chairman: I note that disarmament fellows are with us today in the framework of their fellowship programme in New York. On behalf of the First Committee, I would like to extend a warm welcome to them and wish their programme great success during this session of the General Assembly.

I now give the floor to Mr. Patrick Zahnd, the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Zahnd (International Committee of the Red Cross): The year 1998 has witnessed several important landmarks in the development of international humanitarian law governing specific weapons.

On 30 July, Protocol IV of the 1981 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), prohibiting both the use and transfer of blinding laser weapons came into force. Thirty States are now party to this new instrument, and their number is steadily increasing. For the first time since 1868, an abhorrent weapon has been prohibited before being used on the battlefield. It is also the first time that the transfer of a weapon has been prohibited together with its use. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) urges States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to this important instrument and to ensure that blinding laser weapons are neither produced nor made available. We also encourage States to declare, upon ratification, their understanding that the provisions of this Protocol shall apply in all circumstances.

The date 3 December this year will mark the entry into force of Protocol II of the CCW, as amended. This instrument strengthens restrictions on the use of landmines, booby traps and similar devices. These restrictions apply equally to parties to non-international armed conflicts. The ICRC considers these new norms to be the absolute minimum rules to be observed by those States that consider the continued use of anti-personnel mines to be indispensable. The Protocol's rules regarding the use of anti-vehicle mines, the indiscriminate use of which recently cost the life of a doctor working with the ICRC and injured three other staff in Kosovo, should also be strictly observed and, in due course, strengthened. We urge the States that negotiated this new instrument and have still not ratified it to do so urgently, in order to join the existing 25 States parties as full participants in next year's first conference of high contracting parties.

The achievement of the 40 ratifications required for entry into force of the Ottawa treaty on 16 September, less than 10 months after its signature, was an extraordinary accomplishment. To our knowledge, this is the earliest that any arms-related treaty has achieved so large a number of ratifications. This accomplishment reflects the high-priority and sense of urgency with which most States have responded to the global scourge of anti-personnel mines. The Ottawa treaty contains not only the absolute prohibition of anti-personnel mines, but active obligations to eliminate this weapon and assist its victims. The ICRC therefore considers this instrument to be the comprehensive solution to the immense suffering caused by this weapon. Because

this treaty is a direct response to an ongoing humanitarian crisis we call first and foremost on the 86 Governments that have signed but not yet ratified it to give high priority to becoming parties to it before its entry into force on 1 March 1999.

As States begin to adjust their arsenals to ensure compliance with these new international instruments, we would like to highlight the need to ensure that anti-vehicle mines be designed not to detonate upon the innocent passage of a person or inadvertent contact with the mine. This concern relates both to the design of anti-handling mechanisms and trigger mechanisms for anti-vehicle mines. The ICRC plans to address these subjects in detail at the 1999 meetings of States parties to the Ottawa Treaty and Protocol II.

While the Ottawa Treaty is a prescription for ending the landmine crisis, its implementation is the cure. The application in the field of the provisions of this instrument must figure among the highest humanitarian priorities for the coming years. This will require a tremendous long-term mobilization of resources and considerable organization.

The ICRC stands ready to advise States on ways to adapt national legislation for its implementation and to provide examples of existing legislation. To this end, ICRC ratification kits in all official United Nations languages, for both Protocol II and the Ottawa treaty, are available.

We welcome the efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Service to promote a coordinated international approach. However, we are increasingly concerned with the number of efforts at international coordination and data collection that have not yet resulted in new activities in mine-affected communities. This year, a variety of existing and credible mine-clearance agencies have experienced funding problems which urgently need to be addressed. The ICRC is grateful for the generous response to its 1998 appeal for victim assistance. Together with our partners in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, we will be developing a long-term strategy on landmines, with an emphasis on victim assistance, to be adopted next year.

In their work for war victims, ICRC delegates are witness to the increasingly devastating effects on civilian populations of the proliferation of weapons, particularly small, military-style arms. The combination of inadequate controls on the transfer of such arms and their frequent use in violation of the basic norms of international humanitarian law threaten to undermine international legal norms relative to the protection of civilians from suffering and abuse in combat situations.

Civilian populations have paid an appalling price for the wide-spread availability of arms and ammunition in recent conflicts. Disease, starvation and abuse increase when humanitarian organizations are directly attacked and must suspend operations or even leave a country. Civilian casualties greatly outnumber those of combatants in most, if not all, internal and ethnic conflicts. Suffering may continue for years after the end of a conflict as the availability of arms engenders a culture of violence which undermines the rule of law and threatens efforts at reconciliation.

The ICRC is gravely concerned that efforts to protect and assist war victims are being undermined by the flow of weapons. While we recognize that the primary responsibility for compliance with international humanitarian law falls upon users of arms, States engaged in their production and export bear some responsibility to the international community for the use made of their weapons and ammunition. We encourage States urgently to consider the elaboration of rules, based on humanitarian law and other criteria, governing the transfer of military-style arms and ammunition and to find the means to bring the flows of such weapons within specific countries and regions under effective control.

As requested in 1995 by the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the ICRC expects to publish in early 1999 a study on the extent to which the availability of weapons contributes to violations of international humanitarian law and the deterioration of the situation of civilians. This study will be on the agenda of the 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in November 1999.

The ICRC considers the 1868 St. Petersburg Declaration, renouncing the use of exploding bullets, to be a cornerstone of efforts to protect soldiers from superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering. It is disturbing to learn that some armed forces are considering the use of bullets which will explode on impact with soft targets. The ICRC calls on all States rigorously to review, in accordance with article 36 of the 1977 Additional Protocol I, their procurement policies.

Biological and chemical weapons should rapidly become relics of the past thanks to the 1972 and 1993 Conventions, which totally prohibit this horrific means of warfare. However, vigilance and determination will be

required to ensure that these evil genies remain in their bottle. Rapid developments in the fields of microbiology, genetic engineering and biotechnology demonstrate the need for transparency and strict national and international oversight to ensure that developments which could benefit humanity are not turned against it. We urge the conclusion in 1999 of negotiations on a monitoring regime for the Biological Weapons Convention. We also call upon States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to ensure that the verification practices developed within the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, as well as interpretations of obligations developed, fully reflect the far-reaching commitments to openness and cooperation which are contained in that important Convention.

Since the beginning of the year, three new instruments of international humanitarian law have achieved the threshold needed to trigger their entry into force, evidence of the dynamic nature and relevance of the laws of war. The task now at hand is to ensure that these norms are rapidly universalized and faithfully implemented. The relief and prevention of enormous human suffering depend on these next steps.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is Mr. José Mauricio Bustani, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The mere fact that today, in 1998, we can welcome Mr. Bustani testifies to the important success of the international community, especially the Conference on Disarmament. The effective implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction is a complex task and a heavy responsibility entrusted to that organization, and to Mr. Bustani in particular. It is therefore with special pleasure that I call on him.

Mr. Bustani (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons): When I last had the honour to address the First Committee one year ago, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) was only a few months old. Even at that early point in the life of the organization, however, I was able to report that things had gotten off to a sound and successful start. Many of the required declarations had been received and the programme of initial inspections of declared facilities related to the production, storage or destruction of chemical weapons was already well under way. It may be recalled, however, that my greatest preoccupation at that time was the absence of the Russian Federation from the membership of the OPCW. The active participation of the Russian Federation, a permanent member of the Security Council and the largest known possessor of chemical weapons, was without question an essential prerequisite for the long-term success of the Convention. Shortly after my statement to the First Committee — one that may have been a cause of concern to some of its members — the Russian Federation, on 5 November 1997, was able to conclude its ratification process and became a State party one month later.

The Russian Federation's initial declaration was received on 3 January 1998, within the required 30-day time-line. By August of this year, the initial inspections of all 24 chemical-weapons production facilities and all seven chemical-weapons storage facilities declared by the Russian Federation had been completed. The level of cooperation shown by the Russian Federation with OPCW inspection teams and by its officials in respect to the required follow-up procedures has been exemplary.

The completion of the initial inspection of the Russian chemical-weapons-related facilities brought the total number of chemical weapons production facilities declared and inspected in all member States to 59. Of these, 10 have so far been certified as completely destroyed. A further 10 to 12 are likely to be granted destruction certificates within the next 12 months. Requests for the conversion of chemical weapons production facilities to peaceful purposes, as foreseen by the Convention, have been considered and endorsed by the Conference of the States Parties for two chemical weapons production facilities in two States parties. The remaining 35 facilities are either subject to conversion requests, again for peaceful purposes, or will be destroyed within the 10-year time-line set down in the Convention. Regular inspection of these remaining facilities will, of course, continue either until they are destroyed or, in the case of converted facilities, until the Conference of the States Parties determines otherwise.

The total number of chemical weapons storage facilities declared and which have received their initial inspection is 34. During this process, OPCW inspection teams have counted and checked more than 8 million chemical munitions and more than 25,000 bulk chemical agent containers. In addition, OPCW inspectors have visited 27 sites declared as holding old or abandoned chemical weapons in eight States parties.

At this point in time, the United States of America, because it began destruction activities of its own volition prior to the entry into force of the Convention, is the only State party which has been able to launch and sustain a programme for the elimination of its stockpile of chemical weapons. It is anticipated that the other States parties with

chemical weapons stockpiles will follow suit shortly. In the Organization's first 17 months, its inspectors have spent the equivalent of more than 13,000 days monitoring the destruction of chemical weapons at destruction facilities in the United States of America only. During this period they have witnessed the destruction of almost 200,000 chemical munitions and close to 2,000 tonnes of chemical agent. Whilst this is an impressive number, it must be remembered that more than 8 million chemical munitions have been declared world-wide, all of which must be destroyed by the year 2007 if we are to meet the time-line set down in the Convention.

The deadline set by the Convention for the beginning of the mandatory destruction of chemical weapons in all other possessor States, two years from the entry into force of the Convention, is rapidly approaching. The OPCW is in fact already undertaking a preliminary review of several destruction plans submitted by those States parties. We must not forget that the destruction of chemical weapons is an extremely complex and expensive operation.

This brings me back to another subject which I raised in my statement last year, namely the need for greater international assistance for the Russian Federation in this particular area, especially now that that country, a State party and a major possessor of chemical weapons, is confronting a severe economic and financial crisis. During the negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, it was particularly difficult to gain acceptance for the idea of subjecting commercial chemical industry facilities both to declaration and to inspection by international inspectors in order to reassure States parties that such facilities were not being misused for purposes contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention. The requirement to balance the need for transparency and confidence-building measures and for effective verification with the need to protect confidential commercial information had a major impact on the negotiation of the Convention. Over the past decade attempts to reconcile these sometimes conflicting requirements have consumed an enormous amount of time, energy and ingenuity. I must stress, however, that the chemical industry itself was quick to see the potential benefits of receiving a clean bill of health from the OPCW and rapidly became a strong supporter of the Convention.

As is often the case, reality has been unwilling to conform to the expectations which those who were involved in the negotiation process had of it. The truth is that inspections of declared industry facilities now proceed at a steady pace and in a quiet and efficient manner, and that initial apprehension has given way to increasing mutual confidence. These inspections are being conducted at the rate of two or three per week, and to date about 100 industrial facilities have been inspected in 25 States parties. The level of cooperation extended to our inspectors by inspected States parties has been extremely high. Both sides have learned much during the last 18 months.

Slowly but steadily, we are making progress in the implementation of other important areas of the Convention, including international cooperation and assistance. I believe that we are beginning to overcome the initial climate of suspicion which had characterized debate in this area and which could well have led to a rift between developed and developing States parties to the Convention, thus eroding the basis for globalizing political support for its verification regime. We are now coming closer to the realization that a number of useful programmes that would benefit the organization and many of its individual member States on both sides of this potential divide can be both identified and implemented.

In relation to the right of States parties under article X of the Convention to request assistance in the event of the threat of use or the actual use of chemical weapons against them, a voluntary fund for such assistance has been established, and its assets currently amount to just under $500,000. An electronic data bank which contains information concerning various means of protection against chemical weapons has also been established, and further information is being added to it as it is received. States parties are being actively encouraged to provide the required data on their national programmes for protection against chemical weapons.

The first workshop addressing the various aspects of the coordination of assistance in the event of a chemical weapons attack against a State party, including the difficult questions of logistics and transportation, was recently held in Sofia, with the assistance of the Bulgarian Government. The first training course on protection against chemical weapons and the use of protective equipment will be held in Switzerland next month. The course, which is being provided by the Government of Switzerland as part of its contribution under article X, will aim to train 40 instructors, from various Member States, in the civil aspects of protection against chemical weapons and their detection and decontamination. It is already heavily oversubscribed, and we will need to run another in 1999.

The provision of administrative and technical support to States parties, in the form of training and advice, has become an important task of the OPCW. Since the entry

into force of the Convention, the OPCW has organized four training courses for more than 120 personnel from States parties: one in Zimbabwe and three in the Netherlands. The main emphasis of these courses has been on the more practical aspects of implementing the Convention, such as the setting up of a national authority, the preparation of the required declarations, and the escorting of OPCW inspection teams. These courses have proved to be extremely valuable for the participating personnel from States parties.

The secretariat has also established a free information service for member States. The service provides information on topics related to the properties of dangerous chemicals, as well as on suppliers and producers of chemicals and chemical technology. The OPCW internship programme is being set up to help scientists and engineers from developing countries or countries with economies in transition to gain experience by working for a period of time at an advanced research institution. The main objective of this programme is to help establish links and joint research programmes between research groups in developing and industrialized countries. The OPCW will also fund small, science-based technical assistance projects in member States, whose goal is sustainable development while also maintaining national development goals. Details of all these programmes related to international cooperation and assistance may be found on the Organization's Internet Web site (http://www.opcw.nl/ptshome.htm).

It must be remembered, however, that a key component of the Convention is its article XI, designed to foster, for legitimate commercial and humanitarian purposes, free trade in chemicals between States parties. The Convention has now been in force for one and a half years, and the majority of States parties have already demonstrated, or are in the process of demonstrating, their compliance with its articles. The time has perhaps come, therefore, for those States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention which also participate in the Australia Group, and which have not already done so, to launch a review of their policies on export controls in the chemical area, as required under article XI of the Convention, and to report the results of this review to the OPCW. I do not underestimate the difficulties in taking such a step, but by doing this the States parties concerned will demonstrate their full commitment to their obligations under the Convention and thus further strengthen its effectiveness. Furthermore, a move in this area, at this time, will do much to encourage universal adherence to the Convention, perhaps more than any other action which States parties might take, individually or collectively. Universal adherence to the Convention by all countries in the world is after all the most important task on the route towards the ultimate goal of our organization. Only when universality has been achieved will it be possible not merely to imagine, but to realize a world free from chemical weapons.

One year ago, when I last addressed this body, the number of States parties to the Convention was 100, a truly impressive achievement for a Convention which had entered into force only six months before that date. Despite this impressive start, the ranks of our members did not, however, include a number of important countries. The encouragement at every opportunity of those countries that have yet to join the fold has been, and continues to be, a critically important area of OPCW's work.

Progress continues to be made. During the last 12 months another 20 countries have either ratified or acceded to the Convention, bringing our current membership, with Ukraine last week, to 120.

The Governments of several additional States have indicated that it is their intention either to ratify or accede before the end of the year. Much, however, has yet to be done. A number of factors, including the continuing financial crisis in South-East Asia, for example, have complicated the ratification process in several key States in that region, such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. I am assured by the Governments of those States, however, that they remain committed to the object and purpose of the Convention and that the internal legislative process necessary for ratification is proceeding despite their current problems.

Another key country in the Asian region is, of course, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Despite our best efforts, I must admit that we have not yet been successful in our attempts to establish effective communication with its Government and to begin a dialogue on the importance of that country's accession to the Convention. Needless to say, these efforts will continue in the future. I am also grateful for the support provided by the People's Republic of China for our endeavours in this area.

A blank spot on our map is central and southern Africa. While a number of African States have joined during the last 12 months, only 29 out of the 53 African States are parties to the Convention. Considerable efforts have been made to ensure that the Governments of these States are informed of the importance of the treaty as well as of the potential benefits that may be derived from

membership of the OPCW. Research has shown that while most of these States may not have any significant chemical industry, they nevertheless do import, for legitimate commercial purposes, small quantities of these chemicals, which are listed in, and therefore controlled by, the Convention. If they do not accede to the Convention, their ability to acquire such chemicals in the future will be severely hampered by the export controls imposed by the Convention on trade in these chemicals with States not parties to the Convention.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is another complex problem, but one for which, I believe, with some imagination a solution may be found. For those uncomfortable with this country's becoming a member State, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the OPCW is a new international organization, that joining the Chemical Weapons Convention means accepting important restrictions backed by an intrusive verification regime, and last but not least that we are dealing with a region of the world that continues to be a source of increasing apprehension to the international community.

Another area of serious concern to the organization in relation to the issue of universal adherence is the Middle East, where a number of key States have yet to ratify or accede to the Convention. This situation is all the more worrying since the Middle East is, after all, the region which saw the last large-scale use of these terrible weapons. Suspicion has also been expressed that a number of the countries in this region either possess chemical weapons or have engaged in programmes to develop them. The quickest way to disprove such suspicions is for all States in the region to join the Convention as soon as possible, thus contributing to our goal of the total elimination of chemical weapons.

Israel is a signatory State to the Convention and, in this capacity, participated actively and fully in the work of the Preparatory Commission for the OPCW. I understand that Israel was then able to ensure that its important security concerns in relation to the implementation of the verification regime of the Convention was satisfactorily addressed. I hope that it will now be possible for that country to take the final step and shortly to deposit its instrument of ratification of the Convention with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Such a step would, among things, further demonstrate its commitment to lasting peace and security in the Middle East, particularly at a time when another major initiative aimed at finding a comprehensive solution for that region is under way.

My plea, and sincere advice, to Israel's neighbours is to consider the advantages — in terms of security, economic development and political standing — of following the example of the Kingdom of Jordan, which elected to follow those Middle Eastern States which had already ratified the Convention at its entry into force. By so doing, those States have demonstrated their abhorrence of chemical weapons, their commitment to their global elimination and also removed any possible suspicion of their having developed any chemical-weapon capability. I hereby appeal to Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan, Syria and Yemen to follow this courageous example. There is indeed a special opportunity here for Egypt — as one of the forward-looking nations in the region and one with a strong and respected record in the field of disarmament — to once again demonstrate its leadership role by acceding to the Convention.

Last, but not least, one might ask why Iraq should not also follow suit. After all, Security Council resolution 687 (1991), in its eighth, ninth and fourteenth preambular paragraphs and in its operative paragraph 7 — urges that country to accede to all existing instruments related to the banning of weapons of mass destruction. Accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention, even though it postdates Security Council resolution 687 (1991), was clearly foreseen by the drafters of these paragraphs.

If by chance any of these States has something to declare, let it follow the example set by those that have already taken the brave step of joining the Convention as possessors of chemical weapons. Each State that takes such a step not only contributes towards building confidence in its region but also becomes an important actor in the effective implementation of this pioneering Convention and in the establishment of a safer world.

I am, of course, determined to continue my efforts to achieve universal adherence to this Convention, and I hope that in 1999 it will be possible to report major achievements in this area. At the same time, I have to ask those member States of the OPCW which maintain a fluid dialogue with non-member States to step up their efforts to persuade these countries of the benefits, not only to mankind as a whole, but also to themselves, of joining this Convention.

Our Convention — the Chemical Weapons Convention — is a unique multilateral instrument. It has three pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation and international cooperation in the peaceful use of chemistry.

I have spoken much about the successful implementation of this Convention, and I wish once more to emphasize that so far it has, indeed, been a great success. This is particularly true in relation to the disarmament pillar of the Convention. Nevertheless, I must warn the Committee that storm clouds are on the horizon. The well-being of the non-proliferation pillar of the Convention's verification regime depends to a large degree on the support of the major chemical industries of the world. I know for a fact that this support exists, and it is founded on the following two key understandings: first, that the respective Governments and the organization would ensure the adequate protection of any confidential business information whose disclosure is necessary to demonstrate compliance with the provisions of the Convention; and, secondly, that a level playing field would be established as far as the chemical industry is concerned, in accordance with which the burdens imposed by the Convention would fall equitably on the chemical industries of all States parties.

Feedback from the chemical industry suggests that, to date, the first of these concerns has largely been met. The second concern, however, has not. The failure of the United States of America, the Member State with the largest chemical industry in the world, to submit declarations with respect to its chemical industry, under article VI of the Convention, and to subject its chemical industry to inspections has already created a severe imbalance within the treaty regime. Such an imbalance may, if not addressed urgently, strike a fatal blow to the Convention. Indeed, the chemical industries of Europe and Japan, which are complying fully and in an exemplary manner with the provisions of the Convention, and which are being inspected on a regular — almost weekly — basis, are becoming increasingly concerned at what they see as an unfair commercial advantage being given to the chemical industry in the United States of America. Their Governments are therefore coming under growing pressure to request a scaling down of inspections of their respective chemical industries, a scenario which the drafters of the Convention certainly never envisaged.

We all know that this situation has been caused by the fact that the implementing legislation of the United States has not yet been adopted, and the United States Administration is at least as unhappy about it as the rest of us are. Even as I speak, those who support the legislation, in particular the United States chemical industry, are pressing hard to get the bill passed through the House of Representatives tomorrow, in the dying hours of this session of Congress. I appeal to the legislature of the United States of America to live up to the expectations of us all by adopting, tomorrow, 20 October 1998, this vital legislation, thereby allowing the United States of America to fulfil its leadership role in the implementation of our Convention.

It is no less important that the legislation adopted be in concert with all of the obligations the United States of America undertook when it ratified the Convention, in particular in relation to the challenge inspection regime, a United States creation, which is at the heart of the novel verification regime developed therein. As Secretary of State Madeleine Albright herself remarked with regard to the implementing legislation when emphasizing the benefits and importance of the Convention, in her 10 June statement to the Stimson Center in Washington, D.C.,

> "While moving forward with it, Congress should not at the same time move backward by adding provisions that are not consistent with the Convention and would diminish its effectiveness."

It is also important that the small number of States parties that have yet to provide their initial declarations do so without delay. The Islamic Republic of Iran, which, since ratifying the Convention at the end of 1997, has played a particularly active and valuable role in the Conference of the States Parties and, more recently, has also done so as a member of the Executive Council and as a facilitator for the resolution of critical issues left over from the Preparatory Commission, is among this group. I am sure, however, that Iran will live up to its promise to provide its initial declaration prior to the third Conference of the States Parties, which is scheduled to take place next month.

Other clouds on the horizon relate to some extent to the very success of the OPCW at such an early stage in its life. Some States parties seem uncomfortable with the rapid rate of activation of the organization and with the unavoidable emergence of its political role, and that of its Director-General, on the world scene. I know that it is not easy to come to terms with the fact that an international agreement on disarmament and non-proliferation, fast moving towards universality, can work and is working. That is understandable. On a lighter note, even the procedures and practices of this body include no provisions to distinguish between the chief executive officer of an international organization and any other representative when inviting them to speak to the Committees. But I am certain that the winds of reform and modernization within the United Nations will soon recognize that the Director-

General of an organization such as the OPCW — now the only fully fledged independent in the field covered by this Committee — should address the Committee from a different place.

It required a lot of political courage and trust on the part of the States to finalize the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is time now for the States parties to exhibit the same political courage and trust in assisting the OPCW to move from its adolescent phase into full adulthood. As the first Director-General of the OPCW, I truly need all the political support that members can offer me. Those who have given birth to the baby, must, like all parents, accept that it will grow into adulthood and will inevitably develop a life of its own.

I have touched upon only a few of the issues which at the present juncture appear to be of importance to the work of the OPCW. This statement has been an account of achievements and difficulties. One thing, however, is clear: the OPCW is earning its place in the system of international security. If properly nurtured, it will become a mature, cost-effective, global instrument to eliminate the scourge of chemical weapons from the planet for a very modest budget: $70 million — the cost of two modern fighter jets each year. But at the end of the day, the organization can never be better, more effective or more exemplary than its member States want it to be. We need the sustained political support of all States parties to the Convention if we are to flourish. I am convinced that the Chemical Weapons Convention serves our political, security, and economic interests, while at one and the same time benefiting and advancing the cause of international disarmament.

The Chairman: The First Committee can only rejoice at the success of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We can only hope also that the remaining problems will be resolved as soon as possible.

I give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Bustani for his comprehensive statement. Regarding the reference he made to my country, I would like to say that, due to the efforts made by our national authority, our declarations are ready and will be submitted to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) very soon. It is our earnest hope that all the provisions of this very important Convention will be implemented in a non-discriminatory manner by all Member States and that the OPCW will be able to resolve outstanding issues, including those relating to article XI, in a satisfactory manner as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.